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20 CHARACTERISTICS of a Good Church Member



'Is saved and sure of one's salvation' top choice in survey

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Spends time in prayer." "Tithes." "Attends worship regularly." "Works for unity in the church." So what exactly do people consider to be top characteristics of a good church member?

It's a question *The Alabama Baptist* posed to pastors, directors of missions and other church leaders at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting in November.

A brief survey, which included a list of 20 characteristics of a good church member (see characteristics, this page), was handed out to willing participants visiting *The Alabama Baptist* booth at the convention. Participants were asked to rank their top five choices on the survey, with "1" being the most important characteristic of a good church member.

Most picked characteristics

While there were some variations in the rankings, one characteristic stood out as No. 1 among the others — "Is saved and sure of one's salvation."

Thirty-one of the survey's 52 participants chose it as the most important characteristic from the list.

"Seeks and follows the Holy Spirit," "Spends time in prayer," "Lives a godly life" and "Is growing spiritually" rounded out the top five characteristics most picked by survey participants.

Phil Boyles, pastor of Sage Avenue Baptist Church, Mobile, participated in the survey and ranked "Is saved and sure of one's salvation" as No. 1. He said he considers this the top characteristic because "understanding the new life that we (See 'Prioritizing,' page 7)

20 Characteristics of a Good Church Member	Amount of survey participants who included this characteristic within their top 5	Amount of survey participants who chose this characteristic as No. 1
3 Spends time in prayer	27	3
Tithes	12	1
Gives with a cheerful heart	8	
Attends worship regularly	18	
Studies the Bible with others	9	
Discovers and uses individual gifts	7	
Practices evangelism	18	
Dependable	1	
Encourages others	6	
Works for unity in the church	8	2
Acts in love toward other church members	7	
Practices regular private devotional time	9	1
5 Is growing spiritually	18*	4
1 Is saved and sure of one's salvation	31	31
Is a soul winner	9	1
Is committed to the church of which one is a member	5	
Respects the leaders of the church	3	
2 Seeks and follows the Holy Spirit	29	4
Serves in the community	10	
4 Lives a godly life	22	5

*"Is growing spiritually" received higher rankings among survey participants than the other two characteristics with the same total, thus giving it the top ranking for the No. 5 spot.

COMING NEXT WEEK ...

Spotlight on

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
choices



COMMENT

A Love to Celebrate on Valentine's Day

Oh the euphoria of romantic love. That is the message of Valentine's Day as lovers exchange roses and chocolates and keepsakes to symbolize their bubbling emotions. Romantic love is beyond infatuation though one in love is so captivated by the other that it is hard to think of anything else.

Romantic love is simply captivating. It is passionate. It is bliss. It is ... well poets have tried to describe romantic love for eons and still words have failed to capture the essence of one of the strongest driving forces ever experienced by humanity.

Scientists and psychologists continue to study romantic love and what they are reporting frequently doesn't match what the poets describe. For example, anthropologist Helen Fisher did a complicated series of brain scans and concluded that romantic love is a product of a chemical reaction. Norepinephrine and dopamine mix with other chemicals to create the sense of well-being called love, she writes in her book "Why We Love."

Arthur Aron built on this research and reported, "The reason people are so attracted to cocaine is that it activates the area of the brain that makes you feel good. The same reward area is activated when people experience the intense desire of romantic love."

Being in love is now equated with drug addiction and some are proposing "treatments" for those who like to be in love.

An article in *Psychology Today* recently took a swipe at romantic love. The article said people were drawn toward what makes them feel good and gratifies an immediate need (romantic love) but these same people have trouble with the anxiety provoking nature of relationships."

Other studies have concluded that romantic love lasts only about a year and must be followed with "more mature relationships."

Anthropologist John Townsend concluded that men and women approach romantic love differ-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ently while psychologist Karen Horney writes about romantic love leading to a desire to "possess the partner" and to disillusionment.

Research seems to indicate the romantic declaration "I love you" really indicates a possessive, clutching relationship. The emotion is to fulfill the need of the one doing the loving, not the good of the one being loved.

Sacrificial love

How different from the love the apostle John described when he wrote, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son ..." (John 3:16). Here John describes God's love as sacrificial, not selfish; a love that is outwardly focused, not inwardly fulfilling. He says God's love is timeless, not temporary.

God demonstrated the nature of His love when He gave the world a present — His only Son.

"It is almost as if God surveyed all the law-givers, kings, priests, prophets and seers of the Old Testament and concluded 'Not enough,'" wrote the late Alabama Baptist theologian William E. Hull. "All of the angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim of heaven, but still, 'Not enough.' At last His eye fell on His Son, the One with whom He enjoyed the most intimate fellowship imaginable. And God said, 'Finally I have found the perfect gift. Because I love My Son uniquely, in giving Him up for the world will

at last realize that I love it uniquely as well.'"

The magnitude of God's gift matched the magnitude of humanity's need.

The day finally came when "eternity yielded to the needs of time" and "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The aorist tense of the Greek verb "gave" indicates a day finally came when the deed was done. Jesus left the Father's side so that "whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus confirmed that His coming was a gift when He said, "The reason My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me but I lay it down of My own accord" (John 10:17–18).

Ultimately Jesus made the love of God known by paying the price of humanity's sin. God's sacrificial love caused Him to give His uniquely loved Son for the benefit of humanity that had spurned God's love poured out on the world since the beginning.

But there is nothing mushy about God's love or His gift. While the purpose of Jesus' coming in flesh was "to save the world" (John 3:17), the inevitable result was judgment. Jesus described Himself as "light" in verses 19 through 23. People will either "come to the light" or will "prefer darkness," He said.

Whoever believes in Him (Jesus — the Light) is not condemned, declares verse 18. "But whoever does not believe in Him (those who prefer darkness) stand condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son."

God's sacrificial love took the initiative toward humanity already living under condemnation because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). God, "who sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins," provided the means of salvation (1 John 4:10).

Undoubtedly God's desire is that all might be saved (1 Tim. 2:6), but God's gift is outwardly focused. Humanity's free will requires each to make a choice. That is why Jesus said, "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Those who do not believe in Him are "already condemned" because they have chosen to remain separated from God's love and continue living in sin and darkness. Forever and ever they will know what it is like to spurn love so freely offered.

Romantic love is important in human life no matter how scientists describe it or what psychologists say about it. But God's love is so much more. It is the way of eternal life. Roses and chocolates may represent romantic love, but God's love is seen in God "sending His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

That is a love to celebrate on Valentine's Day and every day.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

CALL SIN WHAT IT IS

God's Word does not change. Leviticus 18:22–29 says that it is an abomination to be woman with another woman and for a man to be with another man.

The churches need to call sin what it is, not cover it up. Romans 1:26–29 says that God gave them over to a reprobate mind. God sent Jonah to preach to the sinners at Nineveh but did not give them a preacher at Sodom and Gomorrah because they had been turned over to a reprobate mind and all perished.

God tells us to come out from among them and be separate. People are not being told the true meaning of the Bible.

Lynda Elliott
Elkmont, Ala.

DIGITAL DEVICES

I am responding to the recent article titled "Digital Devices in Worship Services."

Since when did the Holy Bible become too heavy to carry? Will God's holy Word in book form become obsolete?

When you see a Bible in a person's hand it is a witness. You know what is in it. The other devices represent all kinds of entertainment.

I am not saying it is not more convenient to stick an iPhone or other digital device in your purse or coat pocket. I am not saying people who do this are doing wrong to use them in church. What I am saying is that the (See 'Letters,' page 12)





"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
John 8:31-32

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

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'More informed choice'

Alabama one of 8 states requiring women seeking abortion to have ultrasound

Ultrasounds save lives. Meredith Moorer has seen it happen many times. "Our experience is that about 84 percent of women who are considering abortion will change their minds after seeing an ultrasound, and those numbers apply nationally as well," said Moorer, client services and volunteer coordinator for Sav-A-Life in Birmingham.

Few things have done more for the pro-life movement than the ultrasound. 3-D and 4-D images now allow glimpses of babies inside the womb that are so clear they can compel a future grandfather to cry, as happened recently in the Downtown Dallas Pregnancy Center.

'There's my grandchild'

The center's director, Carolyn Cline, saw a father come in with his 17-year-old pregnant daughter recently, believing abortion to be the best option. But after seeing the ultrasound and hearing the unborn baby's heartbeat, tears ran down the man's cheeks.

"There's my grandchild," he said. Then he turned to his daughter and said, "We are going to do this together."

"It brings truth and reality into the room," Cline said. "I'm so excited that science has caught up with the Bible."

A total of 19 states have considered ultrasound requirements prior to abortion procedures. Alabama is one of eight states that require a woman seeking an abortion to have an ultrasound and an opportunity to view the image before having an abortion. Five states, Louisiana, Texas, Wisconsin, Oklahoma and North Carolina, have passed laws that not only require an ultrasound but also require that the provider show and/or describe the image, according to the website of the Guttmacher Institute.

Oklahoma's viewing requirement is currently unenforceable pending a court decision. In January a federal judge threw out North Carolina's Woman's Right to Know Act (H.B. 854), which requires abortionists to display an ultrasound image of a woman's pre-born child to her prior to an abortion and also to offer the opportunity to hear the baby's heartbeat.

Steven H. Aden, senior counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom, in a written response, stated, "Giving women the information they need before such a weighty moral



and medical decision is more important than an abortionist's bottom line."

Moorer said for the 9,000 women each year in Alabama who find themselves facing an unplanned pregnancy, an ultrasound provides information that cannot be found in pamphlets. "An ultrasound gives a woman more information on the development of her child, perhaps to make a choice different than abortion. It's just a good tool to help her see what's going on and make a more informed choice." (*World, BP, Carrie Brown McWhorter*)

Abortions in Alabama drop 15 percent

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama pro-life activists are encouraged by a recent report showing that the number of abortions obtained in Alabama fell 15 percent between 2008 and 2011, reflecting a similar drop in abortions nationwide.

"We are optimistic that there is a national change in attitude as a result of pro-life educational efforts," said Eric Johnston, president of the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition.

According to a report released Feb. 3 by the Guttmacher Institute, titled "Abortion Incidence and Service Availability in the United States 2011," abortions in the U.S. declined to 16.9 per 1,000 women ages 15-44 in 2011, the latest year that statistics are available. That number is well below the 1981 peak of 29.3 per 1,000 and the lowest since 1973, when procedures numbered 16.3 per 1,000 women in that age group.

In 2011, 9,550 women obtained abortions in Alabama, producing a rate of 10 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age. In 2008, the rate was 11.7 abortions per 1,000 women 15-44, according to the report.

The report largely parallels estimates in the National Right to Life Committee's abortion report issued in January, which was based on data from the Centers for

Disease Control and previous findings by the Guttmacher Institute, a former research arm of Planned Parenthood.

The decline in abortions in the U.S. cannot be appreciated without giving credit to legislative and educational efforts of pro-life organizations, said National Right to Life President Carol Tobias.

"The legislative efforts of the right-to-life movement, and significantly, the resulting national debate and educational campaigns surrounding pro-life legislation should not be minimized when discussing the decline in abortion numbers," Tobias said in a news release.

Educational campaigns

"The more Americans learn about the development of the unborn child and the tragedy of abortion, the more they reject abortion as a legitimate answer to an unexpected pregnancy."

Pro-life advocates in Alabama believe that efforts to educate women about the long-term impact of abortion coupled with increased support for mothers who choose life are contributing to the decrease in abortions statewide.

"People are beginning to understand that abortion is not without impact to the woman who chooses that option. Abortion is a decision that has lifelong impact and shouldn't be taken lightly," said Cameron Smith, vice pres-

ident and general counsel for the Alabama Policy Institute.

As the issue of abortion has come out of the shadows and into the mainstream conversation, more people have the opportunity to reach out to friends and family members and talk about alternatives, Smith said. In addition, efforts by crisis pregnancy centers, churches and other organizations to help mothers facing an unintended pregnancy have made a difference. These groups have recognized that these women are caught in a tough situation and are talking to them about alternatives to abortion.

"It's an exciting thing when mothers are giving abortion a second thought and thinking about life, especially when they are able to find people who are willing to come alongside them and help them not be so scared," Smith said. "Churches and other groups who have made that their priority have had a far greater impact than any change in law."

The Guttmacher report made note of a 13 percent decrease in abortion during the study period, which pre-dated a surge in state anti-abortion laws and the closing of clinics offering abortion.

Despite the declining numbers, abortions still number 21.2 per 100 pregnancies ending in live birth or abortion, Guttmacher found. (BP contributed)

National Prayer Breakfast

Obama stresses religious freedom in foreign policy

Promoting religious freedom abroad is a key objective of United States foreign policy, President Barack Obama told a crowd of about 3,500 at the 62nd National Prayer Breakfast at the Washington Hilton on Feb. 6.

"There are times when we work with governments that don't always meet our highest standards, but they're working with us on core interests such as the security of the American people," the president said. "At the same time, we also deeply believe that it's in our interest, even with our partners, sometimes with our friends, to stand up for universal human rights."

"So promoting religious freedom is a key objective of U.S. foreign policy," he continued. "And I'm proud that no nation on Earth does more to stand up for the freedom of religion around the world than the United States of America."

Obama said it isn't always comfortable to do so, but in meetings with Chinese leaders he has been clear that the country's potential "rests on upholding universal rights, including for Christians and Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims."

'Respecting basic freedoms'

Meeting with the president of Myanmar, also known as Burma, Obama said, "Burma's return to the international community depends on respecting basic freedoms, including for Christians and Muslims."

He also pledged support to people in Nigeria, home of sectarian violence between Christians and Muslims. And he highlighted efforts to protect reli-

gious minorities in Sudan and South Sudan, suffering in a humanitarian disaster stemming from civil war.

"As we support Israelis and Palestinians as they engage in direct talks, we've made clear that lasting peace will require freedom of worship and access to holy sites for all faiths," Obama said.

He repeated calls for the release of Americans held in foreign countries like Pastor Saeed Abedini in Iran and missionary Kenneth Bae in North Korea.

Religious leaders

Obama said he looks forward to nominating the next ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, a position vacated by the October 2013 resignation of Suzan Johnson Cook, a former American Baptist pastor, author and motivational speaker who took the oath of office in May 2011.

He thanked Shaun Casey, a professor of Christian ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, for his work leading the State Department's new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives since August 2013.

He recognized religious leaders' contributions to issues like poverty, immigration and human trafficking coordinated with the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, led by Melissa Rogers, a Baptist who previously worked at Wake Forest Divinity School, The Brookings Institution and the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

Obama encouraged faith leaders to join in a new initiative announced in his State of the Union address Jan. 28, "an effort to help more young men of color overcome the odds, because so many boys in this country need that mentor to help them become a man and a good father." (ABP)



OBAMA

Ministers' housing allowance court case appealed by government lawyers

Federal Judge Barbara Crabb's decision that declared the ministers' housing allowance unconstitutional has been appealed by government lawyers, who argue the allowance should be upheld. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago will hear the appeal.

The November 2013 decision by Crabb was "stayed" pending appeal, meaning it had no immediate impact on ministers. The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) brought the court challenge to ministers' housing allowance.

The appeal is welcome news for ministers and provides an opportunity for the federal appeals court to uphold the long-standing statute that allows churches to provide a tax-free housing allowance to

ministers. A 2010 ruling by Crabb, which ruled the National Day of Prayer violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment, was overturned by the Seventh Circuit in 2011.

GuideStone Financial Resources, as part of a long-standing coalition of ministerial benefit boards, will seek to file a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the government's position that the ministers' housing allowance is constitutional.

"Pastors and ministers are facing challenges here in the United States," said Tim Head, GuideStone executive officer for denominational and public relations services.

"While we welcome news of the government's appeal, we rec-

ognize this case is far from settled and we remain engaged to advocate for the housing allowance benefit."

GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said, "We live in a world that is not as receptive to the ministry of the church or of ministers as the world we grew up in."

"Rather than discouraging us, that fact serves to encourage our employees to continue to seek out opportunities to advocate on behalf of our participants across the country."

Ministers should consult www.GuideStone.org/taxguide and www.GuideStone.org/housingallowance to ensure they are properly documenting housing allowance and reporting it on their income tax returns. (GuideStone)

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, *The Alabama Baptist*

Leon Westerhouse



Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham
Birmingham Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Psalm 27:1

FAVORITE HYMN: "My Jesus, I Love Thee"

HOBBIES: Keeping up with Alabama football; fishing

FAMILY STATUS: Married to wife of 55 years, Patsy; children:

Wendy, Wayne and Warren Westerhouse; seven grandchildren

In 1956 and 1957, Leon Westerhouse performed summer Broadway musicals in Atlanta. He was offered the role of Li'l Abner on Broadway but declined it. In 1958, an accident critically injured him and his wife. So severe were his injuries that he was told he would never sing again. Nonetheless, through singing and preaching, Westerhouse has proclaimed Jesus Christ across the United States and on 14 missions trips abroad. In 2008, he was inducted into the Southern Baptist Evangelists Hall of Faith. In July, 78-year-old Westerhouse — a graduate of the University of Alabama and a songwriter — will celebrate 50 years of being a full-time music evangelist.

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the beginning of your faith journey?

A: A pastor named Dr. John L. Slaughter, at First Baptist, Birmingham; and a Sunday School teacher, Mrs. E.P. Jones. Another Sunday School teacher who really influenced my life was Mr. Clarence Cox. That goes way back. I was saved when I was 8 years old in a revival meeting at First Baptist.

Q: When and how were you led into the ministry?

A: I felt the call in 1964. I was working for Frisco Railroad. I felt my life wasn't counting for the Lord. I felt like I had a talent to sing and I wasn't using it for God. At that time, there weren't any music

evangelists in Alabama. I just felt God's call to do it.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: One of the most important things ... is my personal devotional life. I turn my day over to Jesus first thing in the morning. Let Him be in control and guide your day.

Q: What do you get from the ministry?

A: A peace and a great satisfaction that my life is counting for the Lord like it is supposed to be. Doing what God wants you to do will bring great satisfaction.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My wife, Patsy, has been a great encourager for 55 years. Wendy, Wayne and Warren encourage me.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in this in the future?

A: I just want to be available to God, to do what He wants me to do.

Q: What difference will this ministry make for you in the future?

A: It will draw me closer to God. It is my desire each day to be more like Jesus.

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?

A: All the difference. When I had my choice to make about Broadway, I wanted to sing songs about Jesus because He's real. I wanted to sing for Jesus, not just act a part. 🙏

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Creationism versus Evolution

Nye, Ham hash out details of 'central worldview clash of our times'

Hundreds of thousands of people comprised an international audience to watch a debate between creationist Ken Ham and evolutionist Bill Nye, demonstrating a vibrant interest in origins in an era when many consider the topic settled science.

"The battle is really about authority. It's more than just science or evolution or creation. It's about who is the authority in this world, man or God?" Ham, founder of Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum, said Feb. 4 during a debate he hosted in Petersburg, Ky., with Nye, known on television as "The Science Guy."

"If you start with naturalism, then who decides right and wrong? Well it's subjective," Ham said. Marriage becomes "whatever you want it to be." Euthanasia and abortion also become acceptable because "we're all animals."

God's Word

"But if you start from God's Word, there are moral absolutes. God decides right and wrong. Marriage: one man and one woman. Sanctity of life: we care for old people; they're made in the image of God. Life begins at fertilization, so abor-

tion is killing a human being," Ham said, explaining how a person's view of the origins of life impacts all of life.

Ham distinguished between the way scientists determine what happened in the past and the way they investigate phenomena in the present, calling the two fields "historical science" and "observational science." Creation, as described in the Bible, he said, is the only viable model of

"But if you start from God's Word, there are moral absolutes. God decides right and wrong."

**Ken Ham
Creationist**

historical science when it comes to origins. "People by and large have not been taught to look at what you believe about the past as different from what you're observing in the present," he said. "You don't observe the past directly.

"There's a big difference between historical science, talking about the past, and observational science, talking about the present," Ham said in the 150-minute debate moderated by CNN's Tom Foreman.

Nye, CEO of the Planetary Society, said mainstream science makes no distinction between historical science and observational science. "These are constructs unique to Mr. Ham," he said, adding that the same natural laws apply to the past and the present.

Nye, an agnostic, made a case for what he called the absurdity of "Ken Ham's creation model."

"Mr. Ham and his followers have this



As noted in this poster, creationist Ken Ham (right) faced off with Bill Nye 'The Science Guy' at the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky., on Feb. 4. The debate was streamed live online.

remarkable view of a worldwide flood that somehow influenced everything that we observe in nature — a 500-foot wooden boat, eight zookeepers for 14,000 individual animals, every land plant in the world underwater for a full year. I ask us all 'Is that really reasonable?'" Nye said.

Fossils found in limestone in Kentucky, for example, prove the earth is much older than Ham allows, Nye said. "We are standing on millions of layers of ancient life. How could those animals have lived their entire life and formed these layers in just 4,000 years?" he said. "There isn't enough

time since Mr. Ham's flood for this limestone that we're standing on to have come into existence."

'Collapse of Christian morality'

The Bible is not "a more reasonable assessment of the natural laws we see around us than what I and everybody in here can observe," Nye said, calling such a view "unsettling, troubling." Nye charged Ham with holding a "magical" notion that natural laws have not always operated in the same way, an apparent reference to Ham's view that God intervened in the world supernaturally at key points in history.

In the debate over origins, Ham said the terms need to be defined correctly. "I assert the word 'science' has been hijacked by secularists in teaching evolution to force the religion of naturalism on generations of kids," he said.

"We see the collapse of Christian morality in our culture and increasing moral relativism because generations of kids are being taught the religion of naturalism and that the Bible can't be trusted," Ham said.

Creationists and evolutionists work side-by-side on medicines, vaccines and other innovations, Ham said. "It doesn't matter whether you're a creationist or an evolutionist. All scientists have the same experimental, observational science."

Where he and Nye differ, Ham said, is in their starting points as they try to interpret the evidence for how life began.

"I admit my starting point is that God is the ultimate authority," Ham said. "If someone doesn't accept that, then man has to be the ultimate authority. That's really the difference when it comes down to it." (BP)

The Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky., opened in May 2007 and attendance the first year surpassed expectations, allowing it to gain in popularity. One of its earliest exhibits was the 'Dinosaur Den' (shown here). The museum has continued to grow and is now 70,000 square feet. It brings the pages of the Bible to life and casts its characters and animals in dynamic form and places them in familiar settings. Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden, and the serpent coils cunningly in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.



BP photo/courtesy of Answers in Genesis

'Outraged and shocked'

Highland Park children's minister charged with sexual abuse

Jeffrey Dale Eddie, children's pastor and administrator of Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, was arrested Feb. 4. He was charged with two counts of child pornography, 31 counts of second-degree sodomy and three counts of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 12. He had served on the Highland Park staff for 16 years.

Prior to his role at the Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association church, Eddie, 41, worked as a juvenile detention officer at the Tennessee Valley Juvenile Detention Facility in Tusculum, where news sources say there were "never any allegations" of abuse at the facility.

According to Eddie's personal website, he served three other churches but his website was removed before press time. Two of the known churches are North Highland Baptist Church near Tusculum, and North Village Baptist Church, Florence. He was licensed to the ministry at North Village Baptist according to media reports.

He has two sons, and according to court documents, his wife, Melissa, filed for divorce Feb. 3.

Eddie was picked up by the Muscle Shoals Police Department

on Feb. 2 for questioning after the church's worship arts pastor, Jeff Beech, found two pornographic photos of young males among files on Eddie's laptop.

Beech and Pastor Brett Pitman had asked to see Eddie's electronic devices after a church member walked into Eddie's office in late January and witnessed a child sitting on his lap with Eddie's hands up the child's shirt.

When questioned by police Eddie said he was addicted to pornography and the images on his computer were downloaded from the Internet.

The investigation was originally focused on child pornography but evidence quickly pointed to other issues, the police said.

Eddie waived his Miranda rights and reportedly admitted to sexually abusing members of Highland Park's children's ministry, so many that he could not recall them all. One victim said Eddie engaged in sexual acts with him at least once a month beginning in 2011 when the child was 11 years old.

At press time, Eddie was being held in the Colbert County Jail on a \$1,030,000 bond.

The following is a statement from Highland Park:

"As a church, we are outraged,

shocked and deeply saddened by the events that have unfolded over the last few days. First and foremost, we are striving to assist any children and families that have been affected by these events. The health and well being of these children is our No. 1 priority at this time."

Contact police

"For years, Highland Park Baptist Church has invested in the Shoals community and we are committed to helping our entire community cope with this situation. Anyone with any information about this case should immediately contact the Muscle Shoals Police Department.

"Any children or families in search of counseling may contact our church office for assistance. In closing, we want to personally thank every person that has come forward. They are heroes and should be treated as such."

Five counselors from Pathways Professional Counseling and Colbert-Lauderdale Association Disaster Relief chaplains are serving as resources to church members.

In a press conference Feb. 6, Muscle Shoals Police Chief Robert Evans said "additional charges are forthcoming."

A preliminary hearing is set for Feb. 18. (Compiled from media reports)



EDDIE

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Clarke DOM to plant church in Montana

The West has always been on Chris Baker's heart. And in April 2014, the Clarke Baptist Association director of missions (DOM) will leave his eight-year role at the association to move to Montana with his family to plant a new church.

Along with wife, Kim, and their two sons, Baker will move to Red Lodge, Montana, where he will work in conjunction with the Montana Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board to plant Church of the Rockies with two other families.

Baker will be the administrator of Church of the Rockies and will coordinate the church's small group home discipleship and missions teams. Church of the Rockies will be launched in August, he said.

"We hope to be a church planting center in Red Lodge and bring in other church planters ... to send out to other places," he noted.



BAKER

Baker surrendered to the call of ministry when he was 17 and began serving churches shortly afterward, he said. He received a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master's in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Baker has now been in ministry for 30 years and has served as pastor of churches in Texas and Missouri. He also previously served as pastor of Safford Baptist Church and Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Deatsville.

Baker said some of his ministry highlights as DOM have included helping Clarke Association churches in the midst of transition and serving as their interim pastor. This has enabled him to better get to know the people, he said.

Another rewarding aspect of his role has been leading the association in missions. "We had a partnership with Guatemala for six ... years so we were constantly going to Guatemala and serving," he said.

The Bakers welcome support for their new ministry venture in Montana and desire to build a strong prayer partner base. To join their prayer partner team, email isa527@gmx.com. (Julie Payne)

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BESSEMER

▶ The men's ministry of **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host a wild game outreach supper Feb. 21, 6 p.m. Lee McBride will speak. Scott Bush is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

▶ **Union Hill Church, Oneonta**, will honor Pastor Bill Barnett and his wife, Nancy, for their 20 years of ministry Feb. 23, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow.

MADISON

▶ **Whitesburg Church, Huntsville**, will hold Whitesburg in Worship on Feb. 23, 9:30 and 11 a.m. During these services the choir, orchestra and congregation will join together to worship God in singing the great hymns of the faith. For information visit www.whitesburgbaptist.org. Jimmy Jackson is pastor.

MORGAN

▶ **Michael Mason** has left as

pastor of **Trinity Church** to return to full-time evangelism with Michael Mason Ministries. Mason served in full-time evangelism for 16 years prior to serving as pastor of Trinity. His last Sunday at Trinity was Jan. 26. He and his wife, Crystal, have two children. To contact Mason call 205-306-6645.

SELMA

▶ The "Sunday in Selma" praise and worship service featuring speaker Jase Robertson of "Duck Dynasty" will be March 2, 2:30-4:30 p.m. at Memorial Stadium in Selma. Gates will open at noon. Members from several churches in Selma and Cahaba Associations are assisting in numerous ways with the event, including **Pine Flat Church, Selma; Shiloh Church, Sardis; Hope Church, Selma; Fairview Church, Selma; Ocmulgee Church, Selma; and First Church, Selma**. For ticket information visit ticketalternative.com or call 877-725-8849.

ST. CLAIR

▶ **Riverside Church** has called **Ken Maddox** as pastor effective Jan. 19. Maddox previously served at Argo Church, Trussville, for 21 years. He and his wife, Tenesa, have three daughters and seven grandchildren.

TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Alberta Church, Tuscaloosa**, will conduct its first worship service in its newly rebuilt facilities Feb. 23, 10:45 a.m. A special Building Dedication Service is scheduled for April 27, the third anniversary of the 2011 tornado. Special start time will be 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. Larry Corder is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

▶ **Carrville Church, Tallassee**, will host Christian humorist/musician Bro. Billy Bob Bohannon on Feb. 23, 5:30 p.m. The public is invited. Lamar Duke is interim pastor.

REFLECTIONS

"PASTOR, YOU'RE A COMPASSIONATE, MISSION-MINDED SHEPHERD! BUT THINK OF THE POOR AND NEEDY AND DOWN-TRODDEN HERE AT HOME! THINK OF YOUR OWN CHURCH STAFF!"



Prioritizing life & ministry

Pastors discuss their top picks

(continued from page 1)

have been given through Jesus Christ and His gift of salvation is crucial to obediently following His commands. Until we are obedient to the call of Christ to make Him Lord and Savior, we can never become a part of the 'body' of Christ."

David Bankson, pastor of Slackland Baptist Church, Leesburg, in Cherokee Baptist Association also chose "Is saved and sure of one's salvation" as the No. 1 characteristic of a good church member.

"I chose that statement as No. 1 because it is the foundation of Christianity and what establishes a true church member," Bankson said. When evaluating all other characteristics listed on the survey, Bankson noted he felt this characteristic was most important because coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus establishes a personal relationship with Him. "Without that personal relationship the other 19 characteristics are invalid," he said.

Choosing "Seeks and follows the Holy Spirit" as No. 2, Boyles explained he picked this characteristic because the "Holy Spirit's presence in our life is the seal of our salvation. When we are truly committed to Christ and His Church, we enthusiastically seek the leadership of the Spirit to truly 'be' the Church. The Spirit binds us together."

Bankson chose the characteristic "Spends time in prayer" as No. 2. "Prayer is our means of communication with our heavenly Father. In the Gospels, we read about Jesus praying often and He taught us the model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13," he said, adding prayer is powerful because it brings comfort, peace and healing.

In any relationship, communication is the key to success, Bankson added. "Therefore, communication with God through prayer is vital to our spiritual health and to the success of the church," he said.

Rounding out Boyles' top three characteristics was "Acts in love toward other church members."

"Through Christ we have been brought

together as brothers and sisters and are told to love one another just as Christ first loved us," Boyles noted. "That 'agape' love is one of the greatest testimonies to the world around us."

Bankson's additional choices on the survey included "Is growing spiritually," "Studies the Bible with others" and "Lives a godly life."

"I ranked 'Studies the Bible with others' as No. 4, but I would include personal Bible study in No. 2 with prayer," he noted. "A praying, Bible studying believer is a growing Christian who will become a good church member (John 15:1-7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)."

Both Bankson and Boyles noted that while taking *The Alabama Baptist's* survey, their choices of what characterize a good church member came to them fairly quickly. "The first three came pretty quickly," Boyles said. "After that it was just prioritizing what I have found to be

important in my life and ministry."

And while it wasn't the first time Boyles had ever been asked to think about what he considers to be top characteristics of a good church member, it was the first time he had been asked to rank the characteristics in a list.

Encouraging the church

As a pastor, both Bankson and Boyles have particular ways they encourage their churches in the characteristics they chose.

"While preaching, I make clear what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ," Bankson said. "Often I explain that prayer is communication much like a normal conversation, and God wants us to talk to Him. As we study God's Word with open hearts and minds, He will speak to us through His Word and spiritual growth will follow."

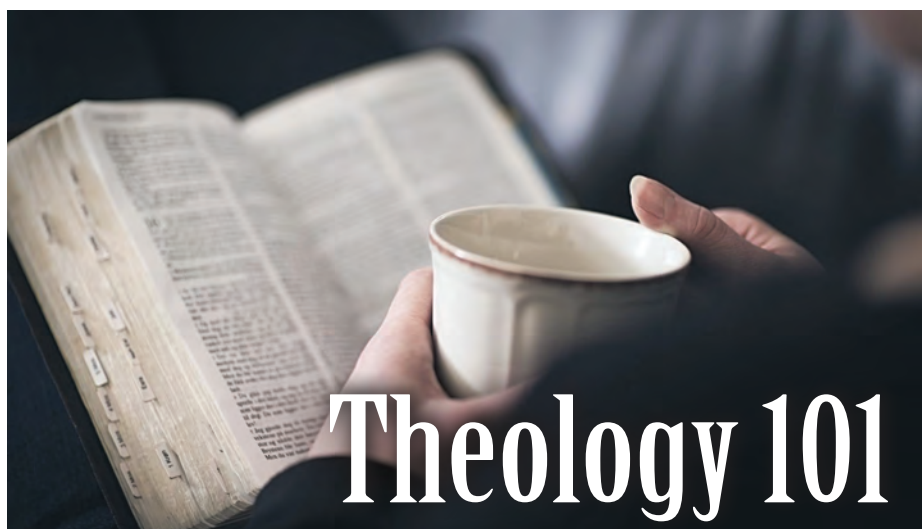
Bankson added when the five characteristics he chose from the survey are practiced, he believes the other 15 characteristics "will fall into place." ❏

"Without that personal relationship the other 19 characteristics are invalid."

**Pastor David Bankson
Slackland Baptist Church,
Leesburg**

"When we are truly committed to Christ and His Church, we enthusiastically seek the leadership of the Spirit to truly 'be' the Church. The Spirit binds us together."

**Pastor Phil Boyles
Sage Avenue Baptist Church, Mobile**



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Christ

Jesus: Came to Reveal God

By Jerry Batson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The majestic prologue that opens the Gospel of John by referring to Jesus as the Word reaches its climax by declaring, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18).

Likely you have heard about the children in Sunday School drawing pictures related to the Bible story of the day. Having chosen an object or person from the day's story, the children began drawing. As the teacher circulated among the class, each child identified the object they had picked to draw. All went well until one child said she was drawing a picture of God. The teacher quietly reminded the child that no one knows what God looks like. Undaunted the child responded, "They will when I get through."

John 1:18 is quite clear that no one has ever seen God. However, Jesus came to reveal Him. Before Jesus got through with His earthly life, He would declare, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Revealing God

Jesus accomplished many things during His earthly ministry. Not the least among His accomplishments was that of revealing God. Our verse says simply that Jesus "has declared Him." The term translated "declared" is the one that gives the English language the word "exegete." This verb is often used to describe what a person does when explaining or unfolding the meaning of a Scripture passage. Some definitions of exegete include ideas like interpret, expound, give a full account of or give a full and accurate explanation of.

Two divine qualities accompanied Jesus' work of revealing God. These were grace and truth. That God would desire to make Himself known by sending His Son is a matter of divine grace. No human deserves to know God because all of us have sinned. God did not owe the human race another chance after the first human pair who knew God intimately chose disobedi-

ence in place of unbroken fellowship with God. Only God's grace explains His offer of another chance.

God making Himself known is also a matter of divine truth. God wanted His world to know Him accurately. To that end, God's goal was to tell the truth about Himself. What better person to bring the truth about God from heaven to earth than the Living Word who was with the Father in the beginning? So John 1:17 puts it simply and straightforwardly, "Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Manifestation of God

We need another word by which to round out our thoughts about God being revealed. That word is glory. The Bible often uses the word glory to speak of the manifestation of God to mere mortals. If we then think of glory as the manifest presence of God, we understand that He was manifesting His presence when His glory filled the temple or appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai. Whether by an overshadowing cloud or brilliant light, people of old on occasion saw the glory of God. God's glory caused Moses' face to shine. His glory caused Jesus' garments to glow on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Back to our main idea that Jesus came to reveal God, ponder the depth and wonder of what 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, "God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Herein is grace and truth giving us the knowledge of God in the manifest presence of Jesus — the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ❏

Jerry Batson,
retired associate
dean of Beeson
Divinity School at
Samford University
and professor at
several schools of
religion, is pastor
of First Baptist
Church, McCalla.



FREE admission

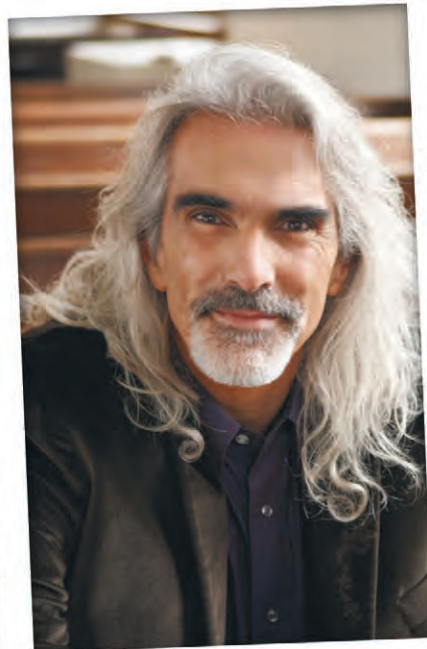
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**Monday-Tuesday,
February 24-25**

Eastmont Baptist Church,
Montgomery

Monday starting at 6 p.m.
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MUSIC: **Frank Jones**, music evangelist, Birmingham; **Kenneth McWilliams**, Enon Baptist Church, Morris; **Guy Penrod**, award-winning Gospel music artist; **Voices of Mobile**, University of Mobile.

For more information, please contact Office of Evangelism Amy Nelson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 258, or (334) 613-2258, anelson@alsbom.org.



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Ten Commandments — Second in a series

Second Commandment: Encounter God as He really is through worship

Have you played the ever popular “Ten Commandments Game”? When you’ve obeyed one of the 10 sufficiently, you can mark it off your scorecard. For most people the Second Commandment — “make no graven images” — is an automatic check mark. No carved idols or likenesses of God sit on your shelves. So obedience to that command is a “no brainer.” But wait. The Second Commandment deserves a closer look. See Exodus 20:4–7.

The Israelites also knew better than to make an image that represented God. Throughout their history, however, the sin of idolatry received more attention than any other. Even though the people knew better they still broke this commandment consistently.

The ancients used graven images, shaped from stone or wood (and later metal) to help them connect with their deity and its power. These idols often took the form of created things that already existed like animals or heavenly bodies. The Second Commandment prohibits portrayal of the Creator using things He created. They are inferior representations of the Almighty.

Characterizing God

God cannot be reproduced in physical form. Nor can misguided human ideas of God suffice to explain Him. God is more than a kindly old man watching over us from above. He is not waiting patiently to follow our selfish orders. Nor is He lurking in the shadows ready to “get” us when we sin. Those images contrived by humans fail to characterize God in all His glory. They are sinful attempts to control or manipulate a God we do not understand. That is idolatry.

Like the other commandments, the prohibition against making graven images serves a higher purpose than simply being an item to check off a list as “obeyed” or “not obeyed.” Instead it helps believers to connect with our mysterious, loving and worthy God through worship. The Second Commandment directs the faithful to get to know God as He really is, not as we wish Him to be or how someone else perceives Him. Human minds cannot grasp the fullness of God, nor can human hands recreate Him (Isa. 55:8–9). The Second Commandment guides us



By Darryl Wood, D.Th.

Darryl Wood is pastor of First Baptist Church, Vincent, and serves on the Alabama Baptist Christian Life Commission. He also served previously on the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions executive committee.

to encounter God through single-minded worship. What can you expect from worshipful interaction with a living God?

► **Encounter a nearby God** — I searched on my hands and knees for a dropped key. After covering the room, I called for a better pair of eyes. As my wife entered, she said, “There it is. Right under your nose.” The key lay touching my shoe. Often we search high and low for God only to find Him right there under our nose — near as He promised.

Ancient worshippers fabricated idols because they believed their gods to be distant. An image they handled convinced them of their god’s nearness. Yahweh God, however, is Spirit. He draws close to His people as they call on Him (Deut. 4:7; Ps. 73:28). No need exists for artificial props to unite you with God. He stands ready to respond to you. The Second Commandment directs God’s people to revel in His presence.

► **Encounter an adequate God** — A carved block of wood, a crisp new \$100 bill or a long-awaited smartphone may attract your attention. Those things fill an immediate longing but their value fades with time. Then another longing begs to be addressed.

Every person has a need to relate to the One greater than us. Only God Himself can fill that emptiness within the human spirit. The Bible reveals God as One who acts (Isa. 64:4). He is no passive bystander. From the beginning He has been at work. And God labors tirelessly and effectively to benefit humankind.

God attained the pinnacle of His activity through the saving work of Jesus. He proved how far He will go, even to death, to provide forgiveness and a new way of

life for you. The Second Commandment aims you toward the exaltation of God, who stands ready to assist you in meeting your biggest challenges.

► **Encounter a merciful God** — As “jealous” or “zealous,” God demands your attention. He holds to those who are for Him. He judges those who are against Him. God desires every person to declare allegiance to Him. A failure to do so carries the consequences of judgment as far as “the third and the fourth generations.” In other words, when sin becomes a way of life, future generations tend to adopt it after the example of those who have gone before.

God values you. That’s why He requires exclusive devotion. Your heart’s focus on Him above all allows God to protect your relationship at all times. The advantage of this bond with God is His “mercy,” or kind, compassionate love bestowed on you. And the effect of that mercy extended to you enables you to influence others to seek God as well. If the results of God’s judgment trickle down three or four generations, His mercy flows freely to thousands of generations (Ps. 136). The Second Commandment appeals to you to receive God’s grace humbly and extend it to others.

So you want to know what God looks like? Just ask any 5-year-old to draw you a picture. She’ll know exactly how God looks. It will be a cute image, for sure. But the Second Commandment insists that believers move beyond the cute, oversimplifications of God that we manufacture. Alternatively we are to worship a God who blows our minds and thrills our hearts with His boundless power, love and creativity.

Honor Him in worship

God rewards loyalty expressed through adoring worship. When you honor Him in worship, you get to know personally the One who is near at all times, able to do all things and on your side all the way to eternity.

You hold an advantage over the original recipients of the Ten Commandments. God revealed Himself perfectly in Christ. He explains your one-of-a-kind God as no contrived image could. He is worthy of worship characterized by joyful praise, contrite confession, heartfelt thanksgiving and the humble offering of yourself to Him. 🙏

‘Bible mindedness’

Birmingham ranks as No. 2 Bible-friendly city in US

How does Birmingham rank when it comes to cities that are Bible-friendly? No. 2 overall, according to a study that analyzed the “Bible mindedness” of the top 100 cities by population in the U.S.

In the newly released ranking from American Bible Society, Birmingham climbed two spots from its previous No. 4 ranking.

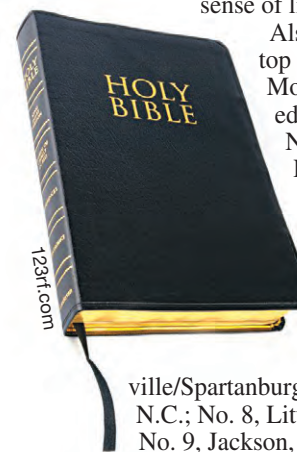
Chattanooga, Tenn., took this year’s top spot as the most Bible-minded city, also climbing two spots from its previous ranking.

The study, conducted by Barna Group, calculated a city’s Bible-mindedness based on combined levels of regular Bible reading and residents’ belief in the accuracy of the Bible.

“An analysis of interaction with and views of the Bible continues to help us evaluate the Bible landscape in America,” said Geoffrey Morin, chief communications officer at American Bible Society.

‘Best-selling book’

“To help people engage with the best-selling book of all time’s life-changing message, we need to understand where people are starting from. But ultimately we want people to know whether you live in one of the most or least Bible-minded cities, the Bible can speak to your needs, challenges and concerns and help you make sense of life.”



Also ranking in the top 10 “America’s Most Bible-Minded Cities” were: No. 3, Roanoke/Lynchburg, Va.; No. 4, Springfield, Mo.; No. 5, Shreveport, La.; No. 6, Charlotte, N.C.; No. 7, Greenville/Spartanburg, S.C./Asheville N.C.; No. 8, Little Rock, Ark.; No. 9, Jackson, Miss.; and No. 10, Knoxville, Tenn.

On the other end of the spectrum, the study found that the least Bible-minded cities are Providence, R.I./ New Bedford, Mass.

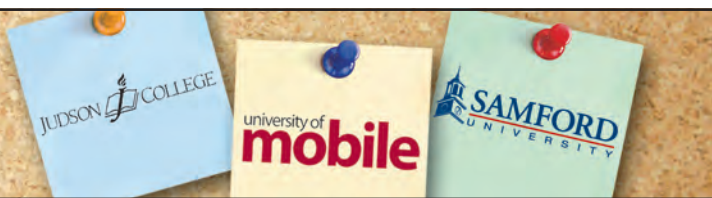
For a full list of rankings, visit www.americانبible.org/features/americas-most-bible-minded-cities.

The data reported is based on telephone and online interviews with nationwide random samples of 46,274 adults conducted during a seven-year period, ending in August 2013. Respondents who report reading the Bible within the past seven days and who agree strongly in the accuracy of the Bible are classified as “Bible Minded.” (TAB)

“And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?” 1 Cor. 14:8

CAMPUS

News



UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile Hosts Exhibit by Ceramics Artist:** The University of Mobile art department will host artwork from local ceramics artist Maria Spies at the Marilyn Foley Art Gallery through Feb. 28. Spies will demonstrate her work at 1 p.m. Feb. 27 with a reception to follow. The gallery is located in the Ben May Building.

For more information, contact Phillip Counselman at 251-442-2283 or visit www.umobile.edu.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Baptist Joint Committee's Brent Walker to Give Lecture:** J. Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee (BJC) for Religious Liberty in Washington, will give the 2014 James A. Auchmuty Lecture at Samford University in Birmingham on Feb. 20 at 10 a.m. in Reid Chapel. The public is invited.

Primarily an education and advocacy organization, the BJC is a leading voice in the fight to uphold the historic Baptist principle of religious freedom.

Walker's lecture is presented by Shades Crest Baptist Church, Bluff Park, and Samford's Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence through the Auchmuty Fund for Congregational Leadership. Auch-

muty, a 1957 Samford graduate, served as pastor of Shades Crest Baptist for 27 years.

Walker also will lead a University Fellows Roundtable at 3 p.m. in Samford's Brooks Hall, Room 105 on Feb. 19.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Programs Scheduled on Science/Religion Relationship and Civil Rights Era:** Judson College in Marion continues to celebrate its 175th anniversary with upcoming programs.

On Feb. 13, The Gift of Reason: Exploring Intersections of Science and Biblical Faith will be led by Steven F. Donaldson, associate professor of mathematics and computer science at Samford University in Birmingham. There will be two sessions.

The first session, "The Seven Deadly Sins of Science and Religion," is at 11 a.m. and is open to the public. It will be held in Ramsay-McCrummen Chapel.

The second presentation, "A Scientist Talks about Faith," is at 1:30 p.m. for students whose interests are focused on the sciences. It will be held in the Armstrong-Adams Lecture Room of the Lowder Science Building.

The school also will present four performances of JimmyLee, a poignant portrayal of Jimmie Lee Jackson, the young Civil Rights activist who died from injuries

he received during a voting rights demonstration in Marion in 1965.

Jackson's death inspired the march from Selma to Montgomery, which is known as Bloody Sunday.

The play will be performed at Alumnae Auditorium Feb. 26-28 and March 1 at 6 p.m.

JimmyLee is written and directed by Billie Jean Young, Judson College's artist in residence and associate professor of fine and performing arts. For more information, call 334-683-5125.

► **Preview of School and Horse Show Set:** Judson College in Marion will host its Spring Preview and Scholarship Day on Feb. 15. High school seniors and transfer students are invited to participate in testing for academic scholarships, tryouts for athletic scholarships and auditions for performing arts scholarships.

Performing arts scholarships are available in piano, organ, voice and theatre. Athletic scholarships are available for soccer, softball, tennis, basketball and volleyball.

The Intercollegiate Horse Show Association also will hold its state competition on campus that day. Equine competitions are scheduled for 9 and 11 a.m. at the Equine Science Center, Dunkin Athletic Park.

For more information, call 1-800-447-9472.

► **Judson Professor Organizes State Event:** Ray H. Price, head of the mathematics/physics department at Judson College in Marion, organized an annual college mathematics teachers' conference. Held Feb. 8 at Auburn University, it was the 64th meeting of the Alabama Association of College Teachers of Mathematics. Price has served as president for the past year.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Harmony Grove Baptist Church in Winfield, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: Harmony Grove Pastor Search, P.O. Box 1432, Winfield, AL 35594, or harmonygrovebaptist@gmail.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR-MUSIC: First Baptist Church of Florence, Ala., is accepting resumés and music DVDs for the position of associate pastor-music. Reply to FBC, 209 N. Walnut Street, Florence, AL 35630, or email to: dmcgee@fbcflorence.com.

WORSHIP MINISTER: Wilmer Baptist Church is searching for an experienced, spirit-filled individual to join us full-time as our worship minister. We are also searching for an interim worship leader until that position is filled. For a detailed job description for both positions, visit www.wilmerchurch.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Meek Baptist Church in Arley, Ala., is seeking a godly man to lead our choir and congregation in blended style worship. Email resumé: meekbaptist@bellsouth.net. www.meekbc.com.

WORSHIP LEADER: Underwood Baptist Church in Montevallo is currently seeking a part-time worship leader to

lead us in blended worship. Please email resumés to: info@underwoodbaptist.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP: FBC Fairview (NE Cullman County) is seeking a bivocational minister of music/worship to lead in blended worship services. Send resumé to: fbcfpastor@att.net by March 12.

STUDENT PASTOR: Southside Baptist Church in Troy, Ala., is currently seeking to fill the position of a full-time student pastor. This ministry position will be responsible for ministering and discipling students from 7th grade through college. Full-time ministerial experience and four-year degree is preferred. To apply, please send your resumé to: southside@troycable.net, ATTN: Student Minister Search Committee.

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CHRISTIAN VALUES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY: Christian Values Technology Company seeks mature business professionals for high-income opportunity. Home-based office. Hands-on support and apprenticeship-style training. For complete information, call Paul at 888-710-6994.

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CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS: Let Webb Builders help your church expand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

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AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS: Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct. Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Call 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231, 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

BIBLE LAND DEPARTURES: Cruise and tour in the steps of Paul and John catering to the Southern Baptist. 8-19 day first class packages. www.pilgrimtours.com. 1-800-322-0788.

LOG CABIN: Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

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Want to know God?

Pastor David W. Bailey
Cottondale Baptist Church

Nature reveals much about God's character (that is why some Bible scholars speak of the first half of Psalm 19 as dealing with natural revelation). According to the apostle Paul in Romans 1, God's invisible attributes (namely, His eternal power and divine nature) have been clearly on display for all to see since the dawn of creation. This makes all of us without excuse before God. I cannot say, "But God, it is not fair that You judge my sin — I did not even know You existed." Sorry. That excuse does not hold water. All around us the evidence of God's existence, His power, His character is plain and undeniable. We can know God by observation of His creative and sustaining power everywhere we look. But is that enough? No.

We need the special revelation of God through His Word. It is great to know about God, but if you want to know Him personally and in a way that will change your life and your eternity for unspeakable good, you must have God reveal Himself to you. That happens with the Bible.

The second half of Psalm 19 speaks clearly about the nature and benefits of Scripture. Last time I mentioned two things you could not know about me unless I told you, one of which is my greatest theological inconsistency — I hate to fly. I know God is sovereign; I know that He has lovingly numbered my days. I shouldn't hate to fly, but I do. You wouldn't know that if I didn't tell you.

God has chosen to tell you how to be saved. You, like David Bailey, are a sinner. You are a rebel against God's just mastery over your life. He is Lord; He calls the shots. But you have set yourself as His enemy.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, lived a perfect life of obedience to God's will. He never once sinned, though He was tempted. He died on the cross to pay for His people's sins. He rose again the third day. He is seated at the right hand of God and He will return in power someday. Repent of your sins. Believe in Jesus. Call upon Him to save you. He will. Then, and only then, will you truly know God.



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Estate Planning

Estate planning is a very important task, yet one that is easy to procrastinate on. If you do not have an estate plan in place that will ensure provision for your family while protecting your estate from unnecessary taxation; or if your estate plan is out of date, we urge you to take action to remedy this situation.

For Christians, there is an added dimension to estate planning – recognizing that God is the owner of our estate places us in a responsible position as a steward. It is important that we use our estate assets to their fullest potential during our lifetimes for us personally, for our family, business and for His glory. As a steward, we must also arrange for the most efficient and effective transfer of our assets at death to individuals or ministries who will continue to use them to reflect Biblical values. Do you want the government to get everything, or do you want your wishes carried out?

While almost all of the reasons for procrastinating are understandable, none will serve to lessen the reality that the absence of an estate plan can have devastating impact on family members and on an estate. A proper estate plan should accomplish the following:

- Express God's plan of stewardship.
- Provide for financial and guardianship needs for all dependents.
- Transfer the assets God has entrusted to you to individual and ministry beneficiaries.
- Transfer your estate in a tax efficient manner with the least possible amount of heartache, cost or delay.

To learn more about estate planning through our partner company, PhilanthroCorp, please visit our website at www.abchlegacy.org/pg. Here you will find over 100 interactive web pages designed to instruct you on how estate planning and Biblical stewardship can benefit you and those you love. You will also find the Estate Plan Organizer, and resource that will instruct you on developing estate planning goals and implementing them.

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LETTERS



(continued from page 2)
witness of the Word is gone.
When I walk out my door with my Bible in hand on Sunday, my neighbors and anyone passing know that I am going to church.

I know the devices are here to stay, but I think we are letting too much worldly influence in our churches today.

Billie Pugh
Evergreen, Ala.

FACING ATHEISM

I was interested in the articles on atheism in the Jan. 30 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

It is a topic that is gaining considerable attention as well as followers. Consequently it has prompted me to make some observations about it.

Rejection of a belief in God is often defended by atheists because of their belief that one cannot see, hear, feel or have scientific evidence of God.

In comparison then the same would hold true for the existence of radio waves. You cannot see them, smell them, feel them nor commune with them. Yet they exist in outer space as well as inner space. Their workings can be seen through TV, radio, computers, GPS, telephones and the list goes on.

The workings of God can be seen in creation, man and the course of history.

Even the most primitive civilizations have a sense of a higher spiritual being, whether seen or unseen.

While at seminary I worked for a civil engineering company that designed bridges, overpasses and expressways. One of my tasks was to take small booklets with field notes from engineers who surveyed areas considered for construction and convert them into working blue prints.

They contained mostly numbers and brief diagrams, but when transposed they produced large blue prints showing elevations, obstacles, depressions, vegetation and important data to help with future construction.

Even though they were notes from projects in the states, upon completion of the total picture, I could recognize the sites that I personally visited later on.

This holds true for the Bible also. When one studies the Bible and connects the various points, one can put together an overall idea of God, His workings and His nature.

Added to this are the testimonies of millions of Christians who have had personal experiences of God working and leading in their lives.

Paul Reitzer
Marion, Ala.



Miss University of Mobile crowned

Brooke Sanders won the 2014 Miss University of Mobile (UM) pageant Jan. 25 and will represent the university throughout the year and in the Miss Alabama Pageant (a Miss America qualifier) in June. She also was selected as the People's winner.

"Winning Miss University of Mobile is a dream come true," Sanders said. "I want to fulfill this responsibility with humility, authenticity and grace."

Sanders, a junior sociology major from Headland, performed a piano piece titled "Prelude in G Minor" for her talent. Her platform was "Princesses with a Purpose."

"I started portraying fairytale princesses a year



SANDERS

and a half ago at children's hospitals, festivals and other venues that needed a touch of magic," she said. "'Princesses with a Purpose' also works well with the Children's Miracle Network, which is the Miss America platform."

"God has used this university to make me into the person I am today," Sanders said. "I can give back to the university by praising the educational and spiritual development it offers to students."

First runner-up, swimsuit and talent winner was Tiffany Baker, a sophomore from Chatom.

Rachel Lucas, a sophomore from Memphis, Tenn., was named Miss Congeniality. (UMobile)

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NAMB photo
Florida church planter Patrick Coats (right) baptizes Kingdom Covenant Baptist Church member Andrew Fellas with the assistance of Coats' uncle, Joe (left).

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'Embrace the call'

Church planter embraces legacy he once tried to escape

You could say Patrick Coats is a product of his spiritual legacy. But it's a legacy he attempted to elude — at least for a time.

A native of Miami, Coats was raised by his grandfather, Joe Coats, the first African-American pastor to affiliate with the Florida Baptist Convention in 1968. The elder Coats planted a church in a school building and saw it grow to 4,000 members.

"Hurricane Andrew destroyed the church building, but it did not destroy the church family," Coats said. "The last major project for my grandfather was rebuilding the church [facilities]."

Coats was never far from his grandfather, so he was constantly

in church. When he was old enough, he began serving, first as a music minister. A degree in music education followed, and though Coats will tell you he is primarily a trumpeter, he can play an array of instruments.

"I was immersed in Southern Baptist life," he said. "I've been everything there is to be in church from a deacon to a preacher. But I ran from a ... call as lead pastor."

Coats ran to music and started a Christian rap group. Although it was a rebellious run, his was a mild one. He remained involved in church leadership but did not want to be a pastor. Coats' uncle started a church, tapping his nephew to serve as minister of music. After 10 years his uncle had a new idea.

"In 2005 my uncle threw me into the pulpit," Coats said. "That began a three-year journey of preaching, attending seminary and the realization that I had to embrace the call of a pastor to be obedient to my Lord."

Coats moved his family to Homestead, Fla., and intended to start slow with his first church plant. He planned a small Bible study and began looking for meeting space. In December 2009 he located a movie theater to rent.

"Forty people showed up for the Bible study," he said. "The next week more came and everyone wanted to have a worship service. That year we baptized 30 people. In 2011 we baptized 33. I backed into church planting."

Kingdom Covenant Baptist Church was the result of Coats' accidental planting.

"God is up to something," he said. "You don't have to over think it. Just do it." (NAMB)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 16

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce, Th.D. Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

LIVE IN RESURRECTION POWER John 20:15-23, 26-29

Many who are not Christians wrestle with the fact of Jesus' resurrection. This reality may be an obstacle to their becoming believers. Believers have already accepted the reality of Jesus' resurrection but have trouble believing they can live in victory over sin and without fear of death. They need to grow in their confidence that the Lord can and will transform their lives by the power He displayed when Jesus was resurrected. Some Christians have trouble believing something else: that they can trust God to help them fulfill the mission of telling others about Jesus. Yet if Christians believe God raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise them, they can trust God to help them witness.

From Grief to Joyful Testimony (15-18)

In the darkness of early Sunday morning before daylight, Mary Magdalene and several other women came to Jesus' tomb with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. It was customary for friends and relatives of the deceased to anoint the body the next day after burial. This is what these women planned to do. But "shock of all shocks," they found the tomb empty and the stone removed from the tomb's entryway. Mary Magdalene ran quickly to report to Peter and John that Jesus' body was missing. She was thinking that someone had moved the body. Both Peter and John ran to the tomb with John arriving at the tomb, moments before Peter. As he peered to the tomb, John saw a remarkable sight: the grave clothes of Jesus lay wrapped together as if a body were still present, but it was not. The arrangement of the grave clothes convinced both Peter and John that Jesus was resurrected. Mary returned to the tomb. There, when Jesus spoke her name, she immediately recognized Him and embraced Him. Jesus insisted that Mary not cling to Him: she would see Him again because He had not yet ascended to the Father. He had a 40-day ministry to His men before His ascension. Furthermore Mary was to go tell

the disciples that the ascension was the next event in God's plan for Jesus.

From Fear to Bold Mission (19-23)

The risen Lord Jesus, that evening, appeared to the disciples as they were hiding in fear. He gave them His peace and then showed the evidences of His crucifixion — His wounded hands and side — that also were the evidences of His resurrection. The One who was crucified was the same One who was resurrected. As the mood of the disciples changed from fear to joy, Jesus breathed on them imparting to them the Holy Spirit. This unique ministry of God's Spirit was to benefit the disciples during His 40-day ministry prior to His ascension. Jesus then commissioned them to proclaim the message of God's forgiveness.

From Doubt to Confident Faith (26-29)

Thomas was not present when Jesus first met with the disciples. A week later Jesus appeared again to His men with Thomas present. Again the Lord entered the room in a miraculous manner and again He greeted them with "Peace to you." Jesus dealt graciously and patiently with His faithless follower, Thomas. He encouraged Thomas to prove the genuineness of His resurrection by putting his finger in the wounds in His hands and his hand into the spear wound in His side. Thomas was instantly convinced. Whether he touched the wounds, the Scripture does not say, but his words reveal his profound conviction, "My Lord and My God." He acknowledged Jesus' deity (that he did not see) on the basis of the wounds (that he did see). Yet Thomas' faith was not the kind that is most pleasing to God because it was based on sight. Those who have not seen and yet who have believed are blessed more than Thomas.

Notice that Jesus accepted worship as God. If He was merely a man, He should have clearly refused it. But He did not; He is God. Because of the genuineness of Jesus' resurrection we can live with confident faith in Jesus even though we do not presently see Him face to face.

Bible Studies for Life By Thomas L. Fuller, Ph.D. Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

HOW DID WE GET HERE ... AND WHY? Genesis 1:1-3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 26-27

Discussions that take place around this week's question seem to require a unique vocabulary, consisting of words like evolution, creationism, intelligent design and big bang.

The Bible's account of our origin, however, really only requires two words: "God said." The primary purpose of Genesis 1 is to set forth the truth that God alone is "Maker of Heaven and Earth" and that He accomplished this by His spoken word.

(1-3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20)

God is the undeniable subject of Genesis 1, His name appearing 32 times in 31 verses of text. The clear intention of this first chapter of the first book of the Bible is to introduce the One about whom the entire work is written. It first presents to us God as the Creator of "the heavens and the earth," an all-encompassing expression for the whole of the universe. But there is more depth to this initial portrait of God than just that. We see here a God of purpose, whose creative acts bring life and order.

The opening scene of creation is one of chaos. The earth is "without form and void" and darkness pervades (v. 2a). But, as a dramatic note of hopeful tension, we are told, "The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (v. 2b). Thus the stage is set for what God would do in the six days of creation that follow (vv. 3-31). On the first day, God dispels the darkness, saying, "Let there be light" (v. 3). On the second, third and fourth days, God proceeds to address the formlessness of things: He gives form to the earth and the sky (heaven); He separates the dry land from the seas; and He sets in place the sun, moon and stars (vv. 6, 9, 14). And on the third, fifth and sixth days, God fills the lifeless void of His creation with all manner of plant life, with the fish of the seas and the birds of the air and with the animals that roam the land (vv. 11, 20-25).

Upon completing each phase of creation, "God saw that it was good," i.e. it fulfilled God's intention and satisfied His purpose. That same goodness is evident in the marvelous complexity and intricate balance of the universe, which we see in the smallest atom and the most immense galaxy. While science has yielded astounding insights into the inner workings of life, world and space, the Bible alone reveals the purposeful goodness of our Creator God and His handiwork.

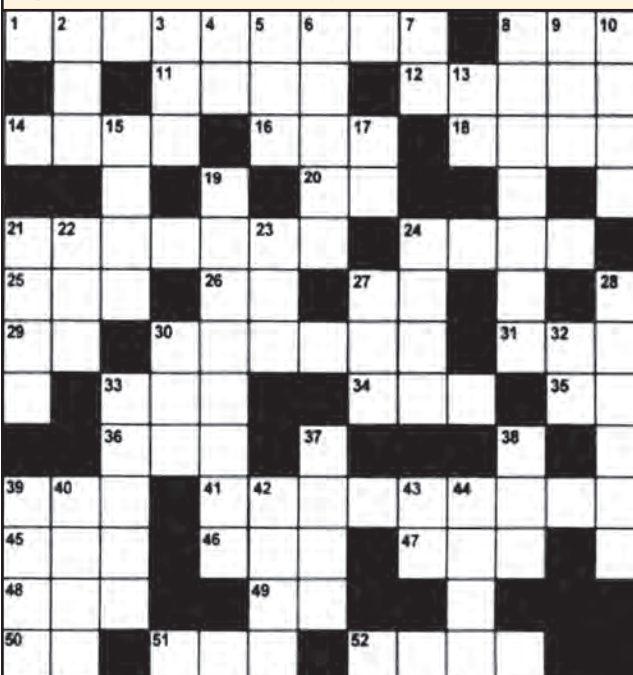
(26-27)

In several respects, God's creation of human beings is similar to His creation of the other creatures of the earth. Both are created on the sixth day; both find sustenance in the bounty of the land (vv. 29-30) and both reproduce with a similar blessing (vv. 22, 28a). What sets us apart from all other parts of creation, however, is that we were made in God's image, after God's likeness. The full and precise meaning of this has been interpreted differently over the centuries of biblical scholarship, and space does not allow for a fuller treatment of the matter here. Suffice it to say, though, that all human beings bear the image of the Creator in a way that makes us one-of-a-kind among all the creatures of the universe. That by virtue of this, God saw fit to grant us dominion over all other parts of His creation (v. 26b); and that we are endowed with a unique capacity for meaningful relationships with God and with one another. It is this dimension of creation, maybe most of all, that reveals the wisdom, purpose and grace of our God and helps us to understand in the fullest sense not only how we got here, but why we are here.



Christian Crossword

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Across

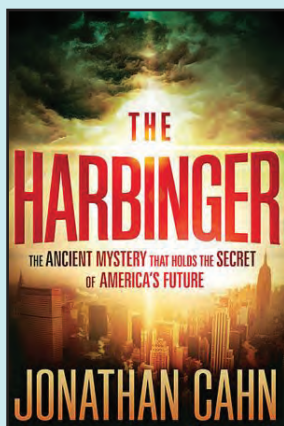
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of _____. (Prov. 1:7)
- _____ the kine to the cart. (1 Sam. 6:7)
- _____ Domini.
- To use oars. (2 words)
- I shall be a _____ forever. (Isa. 47:7)
- In all the region of _____, (1 Kings 4:11)
- Tasted the water that was made _____. (John 2:9)
- Registered Nurse. (abbr.)
- Pierced themselves through with many _____. (1 Tim. 6:10)
- Keepers at _____. (Titus 2:5)
- David did _____ the shew bread. (Matt. 12:4)
- Los Angeles (abbr.).
- The end is not _____ and by. (Luke 21:9)
- "Entertainment Tonight's" popular name.
- The mouth of the righteous speaketh _____. (Ps. 37:30)
- Shem, _____ and Japheth.

- In the _____ of this world. (Matt. 13:40)
- He will hate the _____, and love the other. (Matt. 6:24)
- Exclamation of satisfaction.
- And _____ not his sisters here with us? (Mark 6:3)
- Charged particle.
- Did all eat the same _____ meat. (1 Cor. 10:3)
- Gathered the good but cast the _____ away. (Matt. 13:48)
- He was _____ at that saying. (Mark 10:22)
- 2,000 pounds.
- Tax department. (abbr.)
- Neither _____ there any rock like our God. (1 Sam. 2:2)
- Detached Service. (abbr.)
- This is my beloved _____. (Matt. 3:17)
- Universally. (prefix)
- _____ at that saying. (Mark 10:22)
- 2,000 pounds.
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TOP 10

best-selling books from LifeWay

FICTION



1. The Harbinger

By Jonathan Cahn
(Frontline)

2. Redeeming Love

By Francine Rivers
(Multnomah)



4. No One to Trust

By Lynette Eason
(Fleming H. Revell)

5. Fifteen Minutes

By Karen Kingsbury
(Howard Books)



7. Butterfly Palace

By Colleen Coble
(Bethany House)

8. All Things Hidden

By Tracie Peterson &
Kimberley Woodhouse
(Bethany House)

9. The Chance

By Karen Kingsbury
(Howard Books)



10. The Calling

By Suzanne Woods Fisher
(Revell)

Source: blog.lifeway.com/christianfiction



Photos courtesy of Gordon Mote

Birmingham native Gordon Mote was the first blind student in the country to be accepted into the public school system and march with a fully sighted high school marching band.

Despite being blind, Mote paints pictures with lyrics

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Nashville-based Ken Harding, president of New Haven Records, has worked with such notable talent as the Oak Ridge Boys, Al Green and Glen Campbell. And yet he says he's never worked with any musician as talented as Alabama native Gordon Mote. Mote recently signed with New Haven to produce the album "All Things New," a record Harding calls one of the best the label has ever released.

"He's such a communicator and he paints such a picture with his lyrics," Harding said. "Gordon likes different styles of music, so it's a very eclectic album. But it's all Gordon, and it's a work of art."

Making Mote's success even more impressive is the fact that Mote has been blind since birth.

His foray into the music world seems like it was pretty well predestined. On Thanksgiving Day, at his grandmother's house when Mote was just 3 years old, he sat down at the piano and began playing "Jesus Loves Me."

Mote had never had a music lesson.

That introduction to music was just the start of what would become Mote's passion and, ultimately, his career. Part of what helped him succeed was the fact that his parents never told him or his brother (who also is blind) that there were any limits to what they could do. That attitude enabled Mote to become fearless, and he was the first blind student in the country to be accepted into the public school system. In high school, the Birmingham native was the first blind person to march with a fully sighted marching band. After starting college at Jacksonville State University, Mote eventually transferred to Belmont University in Nashville where he graduated with cum laude honors and a music degree.

It was during his time at Belmont that Mote also met his wife, Kimberly — also a musician. In fact, she often accompanies Mote on his recordings and sings a duet with him called "On the Other Side" on the "All Things New" album. The Motes have three children: Samantha, 17, Parker, 14, and Ashton, 6.

Mote said one of his favorite songs from the album is "The Sound a Dream Makes" — a song influenced by his role as a parent.

"When a sighted person remembers the special days in their kids' lives, they see it in their mind like a video," he said. "But for me, I hear those things in my head, so that inspired this song. Everyone can relate if they're a parent."

Mote and his family belong to Christ Presbyterian Church, Nashville, and though Mote tours often, his family members are faithful participants. Mote joins in whenever he's home.

"Even with his complicated schedule, he's always willing to lead or participate or advise," said Lynn Hodges, the church's director of music. "Besides Gordon's amazing talent, he has an uncanny way of meeting new people, asking about them and being extremely personable to everyone."

Mote's gregarious personality has helped him make friends in the music world. His latest album includes contributions from well-known musicians such as Sheryl Crow, Trace Adkins, Matthew West and the Gaither Vocal Band.

It's hard to pin Mote down to a single genre, as he dabbles in everything from country to pop to gospel — something he said he comes by thanks to a wide interest

in all types of music.

"I've been called a 'music schizophrenic,' because I love so many kinds of music. I get bored with just one style," Mote said. "I find I have so many influences in my music with the playing and the singing."

And he shows no signs of slowing. In fact, Mote is gearing up for a tour in 2014 and will be filming a concert video in April, backed by a live band and orchestra.

"There has to be an underlying joy in whatever you do," he said. "I think joy and happiness are two different things. You can be discouraged, but I think joy is totally a different thing and as Christians we should always have that."

Joy — now that's something Mote seems to have no shortage of.

"All Things New" is available via Mote's website (gordonmote.com), iTunes or any record store. 📻





Photo by Caroline Summers

Bishop Haik Hovsepianmehr, a Christian pastor and evangelist who championed religious liberty in his native Iran in the 1980s and '90s, is one of six martyrs memorialized in statuary in Samford University's Hodges Chapel.

'Powerful proclamation'

Martyrdom of Bishop Haik, memorialized in Samford's Hodges Chapel, observed Jan. 25

Bishop Haik Hovsepianmehr was a Christian pastor and evangelist who championed religious liberty in his native Iran in the 1980s and '90s. He was elected the first president of Iran's Council of Protestant Ministers in 1986 and communicated with the British Parliament and United Nations concerning Iranian infringements on religious liberty. In particular, he drew attention to the plight of Mehdi Dibaj, a Muslim convert to Christianity who was imprisoned for his faith from 1983 until 1994.

Death sentence

In 1993 an Iranian court sentenced Dibaj to death, but international objections assisted by Bishop Haik's press campaign led to the prisoner's release Jan. 16, 1994. Three days later, on Jan. 19, Bishop Haik vanished from the streets of Tehran. Eleven days later, on Jan. 30, police informed the

family that an unknown assailant had murdered Haik. A *Time* magazine investigation concluded that deaths such as Haik's were not random acts of violence but the work of death squads taking orders from leading Iranian clerics.

Bishop Haik was 49 at the time of his death. He is one of six martyrs memorialized in statuary in Hodges Chapel of Samford University in Birmingham.

"Bishop Haik was a well-known Pentecostal pastor in Iran, put to death under Ayatollah Khomeini," noted Timothy George, dean of Samford's Beeson Divinity School.

"We remember him because of his fervent faith, his powerful proclamation of the gospel and his courage unto death."

Bishop Haik's family eventually relocated in California, where the 20th anniversary of Haik's martyrdom was observed Jan. 25. The service was held at Glendale Presbyterian Church. (Samford)

"We remember [Haik] because of his fervent faith, his powerful proclamation of the gospel and his courage unto death."

Timothy George
Dean, Beeson Divinity School

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

SBC CP giving exceeds January goal, behind YTD

NASHVILLE — Giving through the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) in January was above the monthly goal but below the year-to-date goal. The \$17,805,989.26 in contributions is 1.16 percent above the monthly goal of \$15,958,333. However, it came in 3.44 percent below the year-to-date CP budget goal and 2.72 percent below contributions received during the same time frame last year, SBC Executive Committee President Frank S. Page reported.

The year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries represents money received by the Executive Committee by the close of the last business day of January. The total includes receipts from state conventions, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2013-14 SBC CP allocation budget.

The \$61,635,784.87 in CP funds received by the Executive Committee from Oct. 1, 2013, through Jan. 31 represents 96.56 percent of the \$63,833,333.33 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries in North America and the world. The total is \$1,723,628.55 or 2.72 percent less than the \$63,359,413.42 received through the end of January 2013.

Designated giving of \$37,105,671.38 for the same year-to-date period is 6.56 percent, or \$2,605,604.11, below the \$39,711,275.49 received at this point in 2013. Designated gifts received in January 2014 amounted to \$26,066,009.12. These totals include only those gifts received and distributed by the Executive Committee and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities.

Youth worker indicted for 'indecent' actions

ABLEMARLE, N.C. — A volunteer youth worker accused of playing strip poker for sexual gratification with boys at a North Carolina Baptist camp in 2013 has been indicted on felony charges.

Clyde Wesley Way, 68, was indicted Jan. 21 by a grand jury on four counts of taking indecent liberties with a child and four counts of indecent exposure, according to the Port City Daily in Wilmington, N.C. The acts are alleged to have occurred during a church retreat at the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell June 24-29, 2013.

Prior to his arrest July 10, 2013, at his home in Ablemarle, N.C., Way worked several years as volunteer student ministries team leader for the Stanly Baptist Association. Associational leaders removed him after four boys told their parents what happened at summer camp.

At the time Way was planning to chaperone another group from Richfield Baptist Church but after the incident the church cut off his contact with youth and the pastor led the youth group at camp.

In the 1990s, Way was employed as a youth minister at Faith Baptist Church, Glen Burnie, Md. In addition to his church work in North Carolina, he reportedly was a substitute school teacher and a part-time employee at the Stanly County YMCA.

Way is scheduled to make his next appearance in Brunswick County Superior Court on April 8.

Ghana Baptists elect new executive president

ACCRA, Ghana — Baptists in Ghana have inducted a pastor as their first executive president, the culmination of a five-year process of reorganizing the convention in the West African country.

Ernest Adu-Gyamfi — who has served as senior pastor of Charismatic Baptist Church, Accra, for 25 years — was inducted as the Ghana Baptist Convention's top elected leader in a Feb. 1 ceremony. He was elected in November 2013 during the convention's 50th annual session.

Adu-Gyamfi holds a master of divinity degree in Christian education from Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and currently is pursuing a doctor of ministry degree there, concentrating on justice and peace building.

The convention's restructuring eliminated the offices of president and general secretary, combining them in an executive president, and created several vice president positions. The Ghana Baptist Convention has about 1,680 churches with about 134,000 members, according to the Baptist World Alliance.